

Nadler Blasts Bush Iraq Plan

Monday, 12 February 2007

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Jerrold Nadler (NY-08) strongly supports the Democratic resolution disapproving of the President's plan to deploy more than 20,000 combat troops to the bloody conflict in Iraq. On the House floor today, Nadler made the following remarks:

Madame Speaker, I rise to support this resolution and to call upon my colleagues to make a commitment to protect our troops and to bring them home as quickly and safely as possible.

The Iraq War is President Bush's war. The President deceived the American people and Members of Congress when he made the case for war. Every reason we were given for invading Iraq was false. Weapons of Mass Destruction? Not there. Saddam Hussein working hand-in-glove with Al Qaeda? Not true. And the more information that leaks out, the more apparent it becomes that these were not mistakes, but deliberate lies.

I ask you: if the President had gone to the American people and said we must invade a country that poses no imminent threat to us, and sacrifice thousands of lives in order to create a democratic government in Iraq, would we have assented? I think not.

And as the President now says to us that we should continue indefinitely to expend American blood and treasure to support one side in a sectarian civil war, should Congress continue to consent? I think not.

We need to say "Enough already!" Enough with the lies, and the deceit and the evasions! Enough with the useless bloodshed. We must protect our troops and ensure their safety while they are in Iraq. But we must not send more troops there to intervene in a civil war whose outcome we cannot determine. And we should set a swift timetable to withdraw our troops from Iraq, and let the contending Iraqi factions know that we will not continue to expend American blood and treasure to referee their civil war. Only if faced with the reality of imminent withdrawal of American troops might the Iraqis strike a deal with each other, and end the civil war.

We know that the Administration has botched the handling of this war; they stood by as Baghdad was looted, they failed to guard ammunition depots, they disbanded the Iraqi army, they crippled the government by firing all the competent civil servants in the name of de-Baathification. And they wasted countless billions of dollars on private contractors and on G-d only-knows-what, with no accounting.

And all this while they continue to deny resources to the real war on the terrorists. They let Osama bin Laden escape. They allowed the Taliban to recover and reconquer. They allow our ports to remain unprotected from uninspected shipping containers. And they let loose nuclear materials remain unaccounted for, waiting to be smuggled to Al Qaeda to be made into nuclear weapons.

And why does the President want more troops in Iraq? To expand our role from fighting Sunni insurgents to fighting the Shiite militias too. Of course, when we attack the Shiite militias, they will respond by shifting their targets from Sunnis to American troops. American casualties will skyrocket, and we will be fighting two insurgencies instead of one.

I believe the President has no real plan other than not to "lose Iraq" on his watch, and to hand over the whole mess to his successor two years from now. He will ignore anything Congress does that doesn't have the force of law.

That is why this resolution must be only the first step.

In the Supplemental Budget we will consider next month, we should exercise the only real power we have – the Congressional power of the purse. We will not cut off the funds, and leave our troops defenseless before the enemy, as the demagogues would imply, but we should limit the use of the funds we provide to protecting the troops while they are in Iraq and to withdrawing them on a timetable mandated in the law. We should provide funds to rebuild the army and to raise our readiness levels, for diplomatic conferences in case there is any possibility of negotiating an end to the Iraqi civil war, and for economic reconstruction assistance, but above all, we must use the power of the purse to mandate a timetable to withdraw our troops from Iraq.

We must use the power the people have entrusted to us. The best way to protect our troops is to withdraw them from the middle of a civil war they cannot win, and that is not our fight.

I know that, if we withdraw the troops, the civil war may continue and could get worse. But this is probably inevitable, no matter how long our troops remain. And if the Iraqis must fight a civil war, I would rather they fight it without 20,000 more Americans dying.

Yes, the blindness of the Administration is largely to blame for starting the civil war in Iraq, but we cannot end it. Only the Iraqis can settle their civil war. We can only make it worse, and waste our blood and treasure pointlessly.

So let us pass this resolution, and then let us lead this country out of the morass in Iraq, so that we can devote our resources to protecting ourselves from the terrorists and to improving the lives of our people.

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